PAPERCHASE

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Abstract

Paper is drawing's and writing's shared substrate. However, the anchorage of the drawn mark to the sheet, its instantiation as a stroke bound to its ground, is considered different from the detachability of writing's inscription. This essay seeks to pursue the power of writing and drawing practices as indissociable from their material affordances. Setting out from the phrase 'this paper here' it follows a trail of assumptions about paper that render it impossibly blank and infinitely inscribable. Though not limited to either practice, medial expectations of paper already orient the material encounter with it by designating it beforehand as 'for' drawing or writing. Following Derrida's writing on the inseparability of paper from its 'acts', media-philosophical discourses on the 'proper' relations between writing/drawing and its substrates are scrutinised. The essay consequently discusses the blind spots of drawing and writing vis-à-vis its surface and aims to articulate an approach to paper that accounts for the connections of its cognitive and affective power. In showing the intimate connections between drawing and writing acts on paper, the interrelations of gesture and material in any paperwork is explored. The essay ultimately emphasises paper's active role in the cognitive and sensuous work of drawing and writing.

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Biographical note

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PAPERCHASE

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If this is printed on copy paper, it will not be able to avoid talking about itself. Or again, if this is not printed on copy paper, it will neither be able not to itemise itself as a type of paper: now virtual paper, later reading paper, soon scrap paper, then waste paper of the future.

This paper here

Lothar Müller's history of the age of paper (2014) forgoes any such solipsistic statements, never navel-gazing at its own material construction, never self-reflexively imagining itself to be on a different kind of paper, instead it gets on with the job of talking paper. Yet, how can we talk of paper through and on paper without also writing an autobiographic entry of these sheets (virtual or otherwise) of paper? Are there then, different kinds of paper being written on and about? To give any historical account of paper is to speak of no sheet and of all sheets. It is to speak of paper in general through specific papers devoid of their specificity. It is to make sense of the fact that all sheets of paper are unique, but only in the way that every sheet is different from any other, as any object is necessarily different from its own reiteration by virtue of coming before it without being originary. Müller's project is therefore decidedly about the generality of paper through and despite of the specific. The following, on the other hand, is about a specificity of paper through and despite of its general notion. Of course, neither of these papers exist.

What is at stake when we talk about general or specific paper comes sharply into focus through paper's usual collocation with blank. Blank paper is not only void but also generally blanc (white). To demand a blank sheet of paper is not to want a red one, however few marks it has on it (OED, 2016 s.v. *blank* adj./adv.). A blank sheet of paper somehow marks itself out as a sheet that has not been written or drawn on. It does not carry inscriptions. Yet it neither denotes a bedraggled piece of scrap, the torn edge of a piece of millboard or the verso of an envelope, however little writing or drawing they carry. Although blankness refers less to a lack of characteristics – it may be lined or chequered – its void is not just the absence of written or drawn characters. Samuel Johnson's dictionary entry is illuminating in this respect. It notes that 'blank' designates '[w]ithout writing; unwritten; empty of all marks' (1785, s.v. *blank* adj.). The final clause is crucial in describing the impossibility of blank paper. Given the necessary characteristics of paper – with lines or without, detergent white or ecru, rag or ground-wood, handmade or machine-made, deckled or cut-edge, long-grained or short-grained – the lack of marks seemingly refers to a rather arbitrary ascription, whether a particular type of characteristic or usage constitutes marks or not.

Nonetheless, even the notion of prior usage is misleading here and merely the result of the implicit, oxymoronic phrase blank paper. Blankness describes an impossible ideal precisely because it evokes certain characteristics without allowing them to constitute (its own) demarcations of specificity. Blank paper is seemingly different from other paper because it is marked by certain qualities, which, however, do not mark it in return. All paper is prior paper. All paper has marks on it. There is no unmarked paper. There is no paper that does not carry the marks of itself as a singular bit of paper, with particular dimensions, colour, texture, tooth and so on. There is no 'pure white paper', no paper whose possibilities are entirely open, which is the proverbial blank canvas or tabula rasa that may be marked without restriction. Yet, in contradistinction to the actual use and encounter of paper, the ideal (blankness) of paper permeates our understanding of it. This ideal sheet, however, is not really paper as material but rather paper as materiality. A materiality that describes, as Tim Ingold remarked ironically, 'what makes things "thingly"' (2007b, p.9). It is a kind of materiality that, unhelpfully, says little about materials.

So, what then of this paper here? What can be said of its material? What paper addresses you directly; wants you to know what it is? What, or which one, is this paper? What does it mean to read here this paper? What does it want there? Does it interrogate its own – this – support, rhetoric, discourse? Is this (anaphoric) it, which reiterates but doesn't explain, the foregoing this paper, here? Like the store of heres, theres, thises and thats – the store of expressions that depend on the context of usage – is this paper here just a (deictic) reminder, like its it, that wants to show itself as cellulose surface, inky alphabetic symbols, phosphorescent (virtual) white or discursivity yet to come? And if every single one of these is analysed, which ones belong to the text. Can this paper, here, as empirical, tangible, desirable support ever be (endophoric,) inside the discourse, or will it forever remain outside, excluded, always the other, always external to the text. For if we did not print this paper, or if we had printed it on a different sheet, will it have been this paper, here? It will only have been this paper if – self-reflexively – it was never anything but its own discourse, an ideal discourse written onto ideal paper prior to this discourse on paper, written in a virtuality that submits it to any base without ever belonging to it, the transcendental support for a transcendental logos. Yet, it is this paper, here, which requires itself to be tearupable, scrunchable, deletable, overwritable, divisible to make this paper, here.

What is it then that is meant here by this paper? Is it the desirable physical object, or the rhetorical idea and ideal, wrested from the encumbrance of empirical body? Or is it the ideal of any backing that could be inscribed (ideally) like paper?

> It is to be feared (but is this a threat? isn't it also a resource?) that these three 'uses' of the noun *paper*, the word *paper*, are superimposed or overprinted on

> each other in the most equivocal way – at every moment. And thus overwritten on each other right from the figuration of the relation between the signifier and signified ‘paper.’
> (Derrida, 2005, p.52, italics in original)

Thus, to read the words this paper, here, in reminding us of the support of these words, we are encountering both ideal and material. As Christina Lupton puts it, to write this paper here is to complicate the relationship between pointing and the thing (2010, p.424). Through this simple phrase, we face the ideal and the material of writing, and the necessary forgetting of the page and the symbol *as material* to which we subscribe in order to get on with reading: this paper here. In the double negative of Paul de Man ‘the definitive erasure of a forgetting that leaves no trace’ that is taking place in the writing of this paper here (de Man cited in Lupton, 2010, p.424; de Man, 1986, pp.42–3), draws on the duplicity – both treacherous and doubled – of the material and materiality of writing. Or differently, to forget that you are reading literally, letter by letter, is a precondition of reading.

And yet it needs to be written in order for it to be writing and in order to be writing, it needs to exceed the singular mark, it needs to be (virtually) multiple, repeatable, iterable. There is then ‘the obvious opposition[…] between the singularity of writing acts and the reproducibility of the written’ (Lupton, 2010, p.410), a contest between writing here and now and the necessary repeatability that is key to language. Writing incorporates, in the sense that it both ‘forms’ a corpus and ‘embodies’. That is, it forms ‘a body’ and takes on the body of another. In this double incorporation, writing is the mark’s body, without being limited to it, and the ideal of the mark that must be repeated in alterity. Similarly then for this paper here, which needs to be there for writing to occur, it needs to deliver up its body for writing to have a body, but it will not unequivocally claim to be the text’s body. Or differently, in order for this text here to refer exclusively to this paper here, we require a writing outside of iterable language. A writing that does not repeat is, however, not a legible sign at all, because it does not offer itself up to re-cognition in and despite of its difference from notional self-identity (Derrida, 2001, p.310).

Hegel attributes the difficulty of talking about this paper here to the divergence between the sensory intricacy of this particular sheet and the generality that may be consciously approached through language.

> [For instance,] they [those who speak of a reality of sensory objects] mean this piece of paper, on which I am writing, or better, have already written, this; but they do not say what they mean. If they really intend to speak of this piece of paper that they mean, and they do intend so, it is impossible to do so, for the

> sensory This that is meant, is unattainable by language, which belongs to consciousness, that is to the intrinsically universal. In the midst of their very attempt to say it, that This would moulder […] (Hegel, 1907, p.73, author's translation)

For Hegel, the attempt to claim the reality of this sheet of paper, to identify it (as itself) in language, is an infinite task that exceeds our capacity. Rather, the sheet of paper itself would alter, continue its material senescence, which would consequently establish a discord with any previous description of it. What may therefore be said of this sheet of paper is not a reality or truth but what is 'meant'. The reference to any real thing or external object itself is, for Hegel, merely to describe it as universal, because designating a unique object – This – makes the singular itself universal by flattening difference – everything can be This.

The difference Hegel draws between the thing, its sensory perception and the possibility of language to account for either comes into focus in the act of pointing. As the hand can point to an object so can language, yet the point of touch separates how something is laid hold of immediately or mediately.

> But if I want to help out language, which possesses the divine nature of subverting meaning directly, transform it and thus hindering it to verbalise at all, by pointing this piece of paper out, I experience in this way what the truth of sensory certainty in fact is; I point it out as a Here, a Here of other Heres, or in itself a simple togetherness of many Heres, i.e. [I point it out] as a universal, I *receive* it just as it is in truth, and instead of knowing something immediate I *perceive* it. (Hegel, 1907, p.74, author's translation and italics)

Leander Scholz argues that Hegel's choice to illustrate his point through a piece of paper is significant in view of the larger project of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The sheet of paper allows Hegel not only to move between sensory thing and medium but also to address the 'transfer of subject-object relation to one between subjects' (2013, p.168, author's translation). Thus he can introduce an ontological framework in which things are unattainable and already medially exceeded in the processes of reading and writing, which makes things 'mere signifieds of signifiers written onto an empty sheet' (2013, p.169, author's translation). In this way, the writing subject herself comes face to face with her own disappearance, and writing shows itself less a seamless transition from thought to verbal utterance than a medial challenge to the discussion of itself.

On the other hand, as Derrida may describe it, in the very act of pointing to this sheet here, the repeatability of the sign in its alteration – iterability – shows itself as

structurally necessary for the possibility of pointing but also as a fortiori the impossibility to limit pointing to one thing (1988, p.20). Or, differently again, Jean-François Lyotard identifies two meanings attached to the same sheet of paper as a sign. Building on Émile Benveniste's (1971) and his own reading of Saussure (1966) he differentiates signification as a concept or meaning that is quasi-merged with the signifier (sound, inscriptions etc) from designation, which takes the sign as a whole to refer to an actual or imagined object:

> the Hegelian difficulty [is in] the opposition between exteriority and interiority – in other words, on exactly what we referred to as the two definitions of meaning: meaning in interiority, which is signification (*Sinn*); and meaning in exteriority, namely designation (*Bedeutung*). (Lyotard, 2011, p.41, italics in original)

Neither signification, nor designation, nor their combination sufficiently wear out Lyotard's meaning, rather, they introduce additional difficulty into discourse because the first also brings with it comparative value and the second thickness, an opacity that hinders clear identification and limits the perception and understanding of a sign (2011, pp.129, 93). And equally, neither signification, nor designation, nor their combination may be interrogated to absolutely exhaust the figural of writing, because the figure already unsettles both discourse and perception. Though the signification-designation distinction appears useful in order to grapple with this paper here, Lyotard, in drawing on Gottlob Frege, is also very quick to point out that we cannot stop at signification alone, for we hardly refer to the 'sense' (Sinn) of something without also referring to its 'reference' (Bedeutung) (Lyotard, 2011, p.105; Frege, 1892, p.31).

The attraction of the various philosophical approaches to the relations between the deictic phrase and any actual paper lies not only in the richness of the complications they uncover at the heart of language. It is also in the shared indication that the difficulty to write about and describe this sheet of paper is illimitable to notions of polysemy in language. Instead of seeking to disentangle the divergent readings of the phrase – in order, perhaps, to homogenise a discourse – it is *here* rather important to note that they all question a putatively transparent communication through language even prior to interrogating any particular utterance. Whether in Hegel's universalising language, Derrida's illimitable context or Lyotard's sense and reference, the notion that the written mark may be stabilised if only the multiplicity of its meanings could be arrested is displaced. Writing and the contiguity of its meaning are rather found to proceed hand in hand.

The autographic inscription of any particular sheet of paper, which displays the indexical trail of a gesture unless the link is digital, here merely exacerbates the

problem by highlighting the line's connection between verbal and pictural mark. And yet, the written mark may point ardently at its own physical and material constituents without ever belonging to them. In pointing to its substrate, it never ceases to be already detachable, virtually belonging to no sheet and all sheets.

Nevertheless, handwriting in particular has acquired connotations that strongly link it to its writer and the very substrate of its mark by reinscribing notions of hic et nunc into the process of writing as such (cf. Molchanov, 2012, pp.30–1). In this way, handwriting's gesture is perceived as establishing an affective, bodily and meaningful relation between writer and reader of a given sheet (cf. Hensher, 2012; O'Connell, 2012; Williams, 2012). However, as Müller points out, the notion of the handwritten word as coming from the inside, i.e. as having an indexical relation to the one who draws it, comes about in an age dominated by printed texts. He notes how the ancient (Western) world associated speech with the esoteric, coming from the inside, considering writing exoteric, coming from the outside (2014, pp. 90–1).

To speak therefore of *this paper here*, is to acknowledge that this sheet is beset with the multiplicity of being the thing, the name, the pointer and the pointed-at. Whilst we may attempt to cleave clear distinctions between discourse, substrate, ideality of the substrate and discourse on the (ideal) substrate – Which one? The one written physically/virtually onto it or the one written about it? – the layering is already irreversibly part of the very expression chosen. Iterability marks the very possibility of writing as a practice of stolen and borrowed words (Derrida, 2001, pp. 223–4). They arrive and are animated with the burden and pleasure of their former and coming use. Failing to acknowledge the pre-scriptiveness that language use brings to writing, its objects of reference or the mechanisms of 'communication' would thus be to write off the distinction between the description of the phenomenon and the phenomenon.

Writing thus partakes in a number of non-exclusive spaces that overlap each other. On the one hand, it is shaped by any other language use and shapes it in turn, and, on the other, as Boris Groys has put it (2004, p.243), it positions itself in the literary spaces of the discourses it partakes in. Aside from these linguistic and literary spaces however, writing must leave its written mark somewhere. Again, it needs to be written in order for it to be writing. The jostling about the spaces writing inscribes itself in therefore returns to the page, whether cellulosic or virtual. How does the space of writing's mark engage with writing's other spaces? The contention here is that the sheet of paper is never a merely acquiescent ground on which inscriptive acts are performed. Rather, material characteristics of paper and implement inform the gestures of their own inscription. This interdependency of material and gesture is not merely an aesthetic phenomenon that affords affective relations, but also regulates the cognition of both writer-drawer and reader-viewer. The sheet of paper as sensory space is not closed and external to its inscription.

Blancness

The idea of the suppliant surface, conceding all marks but somehow separable from them, is linked to a perception of writing's substrate as an unmarked and immaculate territory. The notion of blank paper as a limitless resource open for conquest or exploitation has seemingly wide appeal, however unfaithful this supposed blankness is toward any actual sheet of paper.

> Observe the maiden, innocently sweet,
> She's fair *white paper*, an unsullied sheet;
> On which the happy man, whom fate ordains,
> May write his *name*, and take her for his pains.
> (Franklin, 1838, p.64, italics in original)

Unsurprisingly, the complex characteristics of paper are commonly explored via analogy, which metaphorises the experience of writing and drawing on paper through other observations or practices. Yet in carrying the (mis)conceptions of one thing to another, the metaphor also manifests particular cultural, societal and individual mores. Among the favoured tropes to describe paper are forms of spatial perambulation (exploration or construction on a surface) and linkages to the human body (touching or using paper like another body) (cf. Ingold, 2007a, pp.41–70, 74–103, 2011, pp.148–64, 178, 196–208, 210–19, 2015; Kandinsky, 1926, pp.54–6; Klee, 1925, pp.6–7, 1979, p.18; Petherbridge, 2010, p.116). In 'Paper: a poem' attributed to Benjamin Franklin from which the above stanza is taken – Müller introduces it as 'humorous' (2014, p.170) – nine different types of paper (e.g. gilt, brown, sinking, touch) are mapped onto characteristics of different kinds of people (e.g. fop, wretch, miser, squabbler). The crass sexism of the virgin sheet and the virgin body – because she is clearly not a person here, but something that requires d(en)omination – alone would merit a longer analysis, as would the implication of sullage of the non-virgin body, but the focus shall remain on the white sheet rather than the necessary readings this poem should undergo in view of a politics of the body. Franklin's poem is interesting from a paper perspective, in the way that it is symptomatic for a seeming engagement with the material of paper without however saying much about the material at all. Paper is conceived as an ideality that a priori determines what it should be.

> Mechanics, servants, farmers, and so forth,
> Are *copy paper* of inferior worth;
> Less prized, more useful, for your desk decreed;
> Free to all pens, and prompt at every need.

(Franklin, 1838, p.63, italics in original)

Although copy paper is here one of Franklin's nine different kinds of paper, it merely describes another impossible white paper. It is open to all marks and implements, though materially – not just nominally – it is quite different from the foolscap (politician) described elsewhere. Franklin's, albeit farcical, description of paper classifies types rather than develop characteristics.

Naming and apparent use are more relevant for the poem's description of paper than any sensory approach to the material. However, Franklin's portrayal is not exceptional because our engagement with paper is already structured by a longing to encounter a particular kind of material, especially one that may stand in contrast to any actual experience of it. As Derrida describes it, we anticipate paper with a 'nostalgia' that makes it 'both sensitive and impassive, both friendly and resistant, both very much on its own and coupled to our bodies, not only with every mechanical impression, but before any impression not reproducible by my hand' (2005, p.62). Our hands' touch of paper does not arrive via impossible neutrality between subject and object. Rather, it is the confluence of bodies that already share an intimate history of caresses and blandishments.

> It is nostalgia for the proffered page on which a virtually inimitable handwriting creates a path for itself with the pen – a pen which, not so long ago, I still used to dip in ink at the end of a pen holder; a nostalgia for the color or weight, the thickness and the resistance of a sheet – its folds, the back of its recto-verso, *the fantasies* of contact, of caress, of intimacy, proximity, resistance, or promise: the infinite desire of the copyist, the cult of calligraphy, an ambiguous love for the scarcity of writing, a fascination for the word incorporated in paper. These are certainly *fantasies*.
> (Derrida, 2005, pp.62–3, italics in original)

Perhaps Derrida's characterisation appears overdrawn because not every sticky note is recognisable immediately for its swooning allure but the act of marking the page is not limited to a disinterested physical deposition of one matter on another. If this were the case, writing would not be readable and pictures could not be seen. Rather Derrida's description of paper points towards the inseparability of paper's sensocognitive appeal and the transmission of power and affection through papers. Though the intricately folded poulet sent between lovers, the parliamentary scroll determining obligations or the duplicate of the gas-repair bill are not bound to their singular substrate, they nonetheless partake in the economy of paper and spread not only their own message but also instantiate their power and affect in paper. The

fantasies of paper, the intimacy it may offer and the power it may promise are not only on the paper but also part of it. The perambulatory gesture that explores paper or the intimacy between the nib's tines and paper's surface are consequently not only allegories of an extremely close physical scrutiny of a material but also already epiphenomenal to the wider effects of the uses of paper.

Freud's description of writing as a forbidden sexual act may be a point in case. On the one hand, it metaphorises writing as the sexual conjunction of pen and paper, and, on the other, it cannot avoid eliciting that any actual copulation may be the result of a courtship by letter.

> As soon as writing, which entails making a liquid flow out of a tube onto a piece of white paper assumes the symbolic signification of coitus, or as soon as walking becomes a symbolic substitute for treading upon the body of mother earth, both writing and walking are stopped because they represent the performance of a forbidden sexual act.
> (1926, p.10, author's translation)

The writing analogy implicitly rehearses the shared etymology of pencil and penis but more importantly also represents a description of putative power relations between genders. Read in conjunction with the subsequent walking analogy, sex is here not only strictly heterosexual but also something done to a suppliant receiver. The comparisons drawn are precisely not reducible to close observation transferred between referents, rather they reiterate other conventions and cannot be limited to any singular context. Curiously, given the pithy nature of the description one adjective jumps out again. That the sheet of paper has to be 'white' comes as no surprise, for it seeks to typify the same object sought by Franklin.

Of the same class of typification, however in a reversal of the analogical direction, is also John Locke's oft-evoked trope regarding the intellectual pliability a child's mind offers to morality. 'White paper receives any Characters' (Locke, 1714, Bk.1, Ch.3, p.21) is not only interesting for what it professes to know about the human mind but also in its assumption about white paper. Müller, although writing about paper, is more fascinated with Locke's metaphorical description of the impressionability of the mind and its power to capture material than with the analogical implications for the sheet of paper (Müller, 2014, pp.177–8; cf. Vogt, 2008, pp.61–3, 79–82). Franklin's, Freud's and Locke's en-passant descriptions are indicative of a perception of paper that purportedly speaks to material experience but are incongruous with it. Of course, any paper has some potential to be marked, but material contingencies predominate the interaction. Make a pencil note on a heavily sized paper; use a fountain pen on unsized paper; write with a biro on an single 'uncushioned' sheet of copy paper atop a

hardwood table; draw an energetic horizontal with a crisp italic on paper that is not hot-pressed; write with anything other than a waterproof pen on wax paper; draw on bible paper with a gushy pen and consider the verso; scribble small marks on laid paper with a fine-nibbed fountain pen; do a thick up-stroke with a sharp, pointed nib on any paper; take a crisp new sheet from a pad, halve it, leave one half on top of your desk, the other between the pages of a heavy book, after a week, write on both…

If such observations seem trivial and insubstantial then having and handling paper is trivial and insubstantial for the discussion of paper. Maryanne Dever reminds us that the intimate practice of dealing with paper, whether as an archivist or another practitioner engaged in paperwork 'suggests how it may be paper's emergent capacities – what it can *do* – more than its basic properties that we seek to hold onto' (2014, p.290, italics in original). Though it is easy to reduce paper to mere pliant ground beneath each stroke and between all letters, paper as a base is perhaps even more basic, has even more fundamental properties for the marks on it.

> When it is not associated – like a leaf, moreover, or a silk paper – with a veil or canvas, writing's *blank white,* spacing, gaps, the 'blanks which become what is important,' always open up onto a *base* of paper. Basically, paper often remains for us the *basis of the basis,* the base figure on the basis of which figures and letters are separated out. The indeterminate 'base' of paper, the basis of the basis *en abyme,* when it is also surface, support, and substance *(hypokeimenon),* material substratum, formless matter and force in force *(dynamis),* virtual or dynamic power of virtuality – see how it appeals to an interminable genealogy of these great philosophemes. (Derrida, 2005, p.53, italics in original)

Derrida's paper cannot be separated into paper as mere ground and the groundwork – that is: paperwork – supporting, authorising and legitimising power structures from bureaucracies to parliament and businesses to border controls. Paper is basic in the way that it is the base for writing, the potential of its force, the material sanctioning the acts inscribed on it and so on, en abyme.

> [T]his fundamental or basic chain of the 'base' (support, substratum, matter, virtuality, power) cannot possibly be dissociated, in what we call 'paper,' from the apparently antinomic chain of the act, the formality of 'acts,' and the force of law, which are all just as constitutive. (Derrida, 2005, p.54)

Despite the active force of paper, Michael O'Driscoll points out that it 'is also curiously self-abnegating […] as paper withdraws from view as the signs and markings

command our focus' (2006, p.224). This retreat of paper to become mere ground may however also be apparent in our own markings of it. Returning to the sheet long after having abandoned it, both writing and drawing adopt a solidity and plainness that they did not possess previously. As if the marks belonged to someone else or were never anything but the original scores of the paper, their clumsiness or elegance is still more anchored and less tentative. When the identification of marks is replaced by the faint recognition of their underlying gestures, both drawer and writer accept a blindness at their origin. A blindness that is also an acceptance that to (re)turn to the sheet is always a (re)turn to a sheet that was never blank, void or empty. It is a sheet that had been written on before, prescribed, and thus prescriptive for what was to come. It is prescriptive not only as a text that comes before the text, but a prescription, a normative grammar that directs and instructs, that marks the passage and maps the way. And, on the other hand, it is a prescription that is the script for the composition of a treatment, the treatment of a (pre)text, eine Vorschrift für eine Behandlung*,* a prescript(ion) for a particular kind of 'handling'. At once, it is a text that calls upon feet and hands to carry on and carry out the script.

This sheet, like all others, has never been merely just white ground, open and acquiescent. As substrate, it is neither indifferent nor compliant. It is not open to receive all possible marks. It is neither neutral surface to be drawn upon, nor a skin or membrane that permits all inscriptions. Its surface as topography and matter as geology mediate the wandering pen. Topographically, it has dimensions that arbitrate its traversal. Crossing and composition happen within and without this space, negotiated by this space, in it and against it. The exploration of this space occurs within it and despite of it. To mark the sheet is also to react and act on and upon it. The paper's size and ratio already anticipate its immanent and contingent composition. The sheet seems thereby to be landscape and map of itself at once (cf. Borges, 1998, p.325). It is traversed and provides the route of its traversal. The tip of the pencil encounters it in proximity, dragging its graphite heel, and yet the territory is also seen from above, overseen, surveilled at great distance and surveyed in its own map. It is walked upon and through, creating new paths and routes, which are also charting their own inscription. Marks and inscriptions – as if already pre-empted – are negotiated according to the paper's topography. These marks themselves then become part of the landscape and its contingency, already anticipating future marks. Every crease, watermark and splotch is another furrow, bog and tarn navigated by composition, construction and wayfaring. In texture and fibre, paper finds its geology: terrain and stratification. Both confer how to access and travel the territory.

The weathered book cover and its hinged flyleaf greedily drink up brushed ink until saturated. Their surface resists the navigation of the nib, which scratches, stumbles, skips and often bleeds. Railroading tines cut into the paper, excavating short, friable

fibres. They will draw up any liquid nearby, leading it into its channel, feathering its edge with a fringe. The surface seems to resist or subvert the pencil by emphasising its own texture. It becomes increasingly cratered and rugged. Only prolonged traversal levels it into an arid metallic trough.

On the other hand, like a terrene plain, the smooth hot-pressed sheet is deceptively easily crossed with any medium, yet, its traversal is seemingly inerasable, its surface so homogeneous that any trace appears infinitely visible. Its face is often so dense that it resists liquid which stays superficial, runs into pools, awaiting dispersion and evaporation, making it buckle.

On paper, ink from a nib appears liminal. It permeates, but sits on top; it is deeply anchored, but raises the surface. In inscribing itself, it engraves the groove that moors it and deposits itself in it and on it. It is both furrow and ridge. Is this seeming permanence its authority? In contrast, brushed ink seems subliminal. It penetrates and permeates. Its remains visible on the surface but cannot be felt. With pencil all depends on pressure. A fleeting step remains superliminal, it hardly engraves, smears graphene superficially. A heavy trudge troughs the paper, making it more than just surface, leaving a leaded furrow. Neither the written nor the drawn mark are two-dimensional, flat traces *on* paper, rather they possess a volume and body that disturbs any notion of their modality as merely visible.

To recognise (this) paper therefore as shifting between submissive substrate and controlling dominium is to acknowledge it as one of the phenomena of Derrida's subjectile (1994). A double, the subjectile is neither and both. It is, at once, a membrane whose subservient surface – mere ground – is energised by being acted upon, by being traversed, engraved, inscribed and penetrated. But it is also resolute resistance to the attempts to traverse it; it has to be tackled and its own characteristics assert themselves. It returns to a binary discourse, which wants to move beyond binarity, because the subjectile moves

> *between* the intransitivity of *jacere* and the transitivity of *jacere*, in what I will call the *conjecture* of both. In the first case, *jaceo*, I am stretched out, lying down, *gisant*, in my bed, brought down, brought low, without life, I am where I have been *thrown* […] *thrown beneath*. In the second case, *jacio*, I throw *something*, a projectile, thus, stones, a firebrand, seed (ejaculated), or dice – or I cast a line. […] because I have thrown something, I can have raised it or founded it.
> (Derrida, 1994, p.169, italics in original)

Without ever belonging to either, paper moves between active operative and acted/operated on. It is at once the available open ground walked upon, the potential

for a path, the possibility of the spoor, that which expedites the step, bidding to be marked and traced. But it is also the resistance to every step, it defies exploration and impedes free traversal. While setting feet free, it also shackles them. If then, both the line of drawing and writing are inseparable from their papery support, what of the substrate? It is a substrate that is no longer sub-, beneath, that is no longer mere backing, but must be found to constitute what is, both as act and inscription. And if it is a stratum at all, a stratum super stratum, it is the merger of two homonymous verbs, not merely a blanket that is 'spread out' and 'scattered' over another ground but also the force that 'knocks down', 'lays low' and 'overthrows' (OED, 2016, s.v. *stratum* n.). And equally the implement, whose tip is bearer of a mark that it partly comes to compose, leaves itself behind in the mark, even when it itself has left. The graphite trace becomes the non-originary remainder of a gesture that itself continues to act.

The question of the interactions on the page returns to the hand whose *traitement* of the sheet opens the abyssal gap that reaches beyond alphabet and mimesis, beyond the verbal and pictural of chirography. It is in the (con)fluence of hand, implement and paper that the body and landscape of the graphic shape themselves. Through the hand, graphic *traits* are incurred in the prescribed composition of the treatment of the prescriptive (pre)text. It executes *eine Behandlung* that draws lines blind to the distinction of text and image.

Yet, to speak of one hand is to speak against the gesture of drawing and writing. Who draws with one hand? How can one hand write? Surely, one neither writes nor draws with a hand only. Initially, there is (often) another hand, the *other* hand (cf. Richtmeyer, 2012), which, though not marking the paper with an implement, still supports it and the drawer, accommodating the body of the drawer in the complex relation between substrate, implement and drawer.

The drawer does not merely hover ethereally above the substrate, but occupies an infinite number of possible spatial relations to the other material. Moreover, the many advantages of paper – flexibility, portability, malleability – also require it, in the words of Hana Gründler, Toni Hildebrandt and Wolfram Pichler, to 'borrow another body' that can prop it up, acquire it as detachable surface or skin (2012, p.17, author's translation).

Even in a very narrow understanding of the idea of gesture, the hand or arm movement leading to a mark on paper, writing and drawing cannot be categorically distinguished. Neither writing nor drawing is limited to one particular position or grip of the pen or to one particular restricted form of muscular movement that guides it. Though writing may sustain a particular grip along the section longer, because repeated marks tend to be of more uniform size, the implements and what is to be written shape the way the pen is held and its movement across the page. Or conversely, the grip and movement co-determine how something may be written.

Especially writing with ballpoints and other hard tools requires an exertion of pressure close to the writing surface in order to facilitate the flow or rasp of matter onto the page. The resultant wrist or even just fingertip movement usually brings with it a reduction in writing scale. This is however not to suggest that drawing necessarily involves more of the body. Muscular-movement writing, for example, requires the writer to use the arm's musculature to guide the pen, often with wrist and forearm touching the writing surface and finger movement scorned upon. According to William Henning the method dates back to at least the Renaissance, though Ewan Clayton traces its origins to Joseph Carstairs in early nineteenth-century London (Henning, 2002, p.296; Clayton, 1999, p.13 n.10, *p.18*; cf. Carstairs, 1816). Though we may now consider muscular writing as entirely atypical, it became a standard American writing technique in the early nineteenth century when it was subsequently adopted in the correspondence and business-writing manuals of Benjamin Foster, Platt Rogers Spencer and eventually Austin Palmer, whose popular simplified Spencerian explicitly required the writer to use the muscular action of a rigid arm 'from the shoulder' – with the little finger making contact with the writing surface – to achieve a light, untiring motion across the page (Palmer, 1894, p.5; cf. Foster, 1836; Spencer & Spencer, 1868).

However, as Vilém Flusser observes in relation to the gesture of painting, we are used to dissecting the body of the artist and her gestures into separable body parts and aspects of movement, which are *the* parts and aspects that *make* the work (1994a, pp.88–9). (Though painting is not drawing or writing the comparison still holds as Flusser's explanation does not hinge on the oft-evoked differences – use of colour, surface coverage, potential for spatial dimension etc – between the processes.) He further suggests that there is a metaphysical exclusivity underlying these aims to 'fill' gestures with body parts, as though the two existed separately.

> The first thing we must do, in order to see the gesture of painting, is to forgo the whole catalogue of bodies moving inside of gesture. Such a catalogue is 'metaphysical', in the sense that it presupposes bodies which are somewhere outside the gesture and only later move within it.
> (Flusser, 1994a, p.88, author's translation)

The gesture is here irreducible to a body part, material or particular aspect of the movement. Flusser seeks the description and explanation for this kind of gesture in its directedness towards a final object: an object to come. Any explanation of the gesture that brings it about therefore needs to address all movements in relation to their future, even 'the future of the gesture' (Flusser, 1994a, p.90, author's translation). Consequently, any attempt to describe the gesture at work should not be a

conjunction of materials and creative subject synthesised into the work, but has to give up the division of material, support, maker, movement etc. Flusser's phenomenology is above all interested in overcoming the predetermination of, what is for him typical of, occidental thought: abstraction and distance from concrete, observable experience.

> Were there a general gesture theory, a semiological discipline that would allow us to decipher gesture, art criticism would not be, as it is today, a thing of empiricism or 'intuition' or causal explaining-away of aesthetic phenomena, but an exact analysis of gestures frozen into paintings. Lacking such a 'choreographology', it is perhaps a better strategy to observe the gesture itself, in the way it concretely occurs in front of us and thus in us: as an example of freedom.
> (Flusser, 1994a, p.99, author's translation)

Of course, Flusser is perhaps the first to avoid exactly such a gesture analysis where it is urgently needed and particularly easily foregone. What speaks against a choreographologic conception of writing? For Flusser, the answer is at once self-contradictory and straightforward: writing is typing. Writing by hand is for him too closely related to calligraphy and thus drawing. The availability of different writing implements (other than the typewriter) 'speaks against the being of writing and recalls drawing' (Flusser, 2002, p.116, author's translation). The typewriter is his ideal writing instrument because it does not restrict the gesture of writing but makes the rules of the available material more obvious. If an 'expressible virtuality' finds its 'expression' in writing (rather than music or painting) it still encounters the resistance of its material: words (Flusser, 1994b, p.36, author's translation). Writing is for Flusser a notation of speech that records terms not ideas.

Walter Benjamin had suggested that the typewriter may only replace the fountain pen were it to permit writers to engage directly and accurately with the conception of their books (1928, p.31). For Martin Heidegger similarly, the connection between word and hand was much more intimate. The typewriter constituted for him a breach between writing and the word, because the word was one of handwriting. Tearing the hand from writing, degraded the word itself in its reduction 'to "typed stuff"' (Heidegger, 1994, p.119, author's translation; cf. Leroi-Gourhan, 1993). As Derrida has indicated in relation to Heidegger's indictment of the mechanisation of writing through the typewriter, handwriting ensured a closer relation to speech and the body, as well as gathering letters together, which was for Heidegger strongly linked to the gathering gesture of reading (*lesen*) (Derrida, 1987, pp.178–80). Friedrich Kittler, on the other hand, has sought to emphasise that the typewriter brought an end to the 'metaphysics of handwriting' that had animated centuries of written philosophy (Kittler, 1985b, p.25,

author's translation; cf. Stingelin, 1995; Günzel, 2002). While Michel Foucault acknowledges the material base of notation and the production, transmission and archivisation of knowledge, his analysis remains premised on the internal structures of discourse, returning to structural formations, types and genres (1972, pp.79–131). Kittler goes further: any notion of the construction of knowledge needs be considered not only in its situatedness in time and place but also as determined by medial contingencies that structure the mechanism of its formation, retention and dissemination (Kittler, 1985a, 1986). The typewriter is only one of a number of technological changes (phonography, photography, cinematography) that fundamentally reorient notions of referentiality and the understanding of the written signifier.

Interestingly, Flusser also recognises the idea of gathering in the act of reading (*lesen*), though his gathering has the deliberation and selectivity of collecting, which allows him to read for particular recognisable characteristics of writing (2002, p.77). Flusser's gesture of writing is thus already removed from any necessary graphic qualities of the written word – not to mention the letter – and more concerned with the combinatorics of clearly defined and limited significatory units. A choreographology of writing's gesture would merely encounter the verbality of words that is already separate from their plastic, i.e. written, instantiation. Given the aforementioned insistence of the danger of 'explaining away' actual phenomena, Flusser's logocentric – and Lessing-inspired – perspective is doubly puzzling. On the one hand, he deliberately seems to avoid the observational analysis of gesture as he encourages it elsewhere, on the other, he foregrounds physical, material and environmental aspects of (type)writing. For example, he part-bemoans and part-endorses that literary criticism is only interested in 'das Himmlische, nicht das Irdische' of writing. Its interest is in 'the heavenly, not the earthly', which carries the ambiguous connotations of 'the transcendental, not the physical' and 'the elevated, not the profane' (Flusser, 2002, p.125, author's translation). But then he adds that, though the writer is more than fingertips, his body has no place to be mentioned, except in extreme cases, like the writing in Gulags. He is demanding the context of the gesture of writing to be taken into account, a context whose physicality, however, he rescinds. Finally perhaps, much of Flusser's writing on writing often reads like a love letter to a typewriter whose shortcomings he has come to adore and require. In relation to the advent of computers on desks, he wonders if we perhaps need the dumb equipment of the past, in contrast to the unencumbered writing of the future, in order to be able to write (Flusser, 2002, pp.125–6).

As Franklin's absurd paper people are more concerned with paper type rather than character, so Flusser is more concerned with the type-ical of writing rather than its characteristics. Not only does he prefer to recognise writing in type, but writing as

‘printed matter is a typical matter and not a characteristic, incomparable, unique one’ (Flusser, 2002, p.52, author’s translation). Writing for Flusser, like paper for Franklin and others, are interchangeable types that are devoid of idiosyncratic characteristics. The body of paper and the body of writing follow clear typologies. The former is flat, blank and open to any mark, its characteristics are background to the inscriptions they serve. The latter is clearly defined and limited; its transparent body appears indistinguishable from its verbality and signification.

Paper blind

A consideration of the gesture and material of writing and drawing thus seemingly extends the understanding of the substrate in action and moves beyond the manual – and with it beyond any *maniera* – to evaluate the corporeality of the drawer-writer as only one of the acting subjects. The materials and subjects of writing and drawing exceed narrowly operational parameters, instead engaging the environmental and corporeal of both drawer and writer, and drawing and writing. As Gründler, Hildebrandt and Pichler stress: ‘No drawing is made by a human hand alone, but always includes the surface of the substrate and often also the invisible counter-support that was removed after the drawing process’ (2012, p.18, author’s translation). And yet again, whilst recognising and requiring the invisible support, we will continue to speak of someone’s writing hand and seek the hand in the drawing and the drawing in the hand, in the ‘reciprocal relationship of hand and graphy’ (Gründler et al., 2012, p.6, author’s translation). So, what is the point of such bradylexic creeping across the landscape and body of writing and drawing? Is this the pendulum swinging the other way, away from a generalised notion of the materiality of paper to one that indulges in the idiosyncratic detail of every single sheet, microscopically questioning every perceivable and imaginable characteristic of highly individualised substances? Or differently, is this a shift toward an inability to see the paper for its piddling minutiae? Propositionally and to intercept any quick responses, perhaps there is something to be gained in the kind of writing about art, pictures, images, visual perception and, above all, the practice of drawing and writing, that is highly vigilant in the observance of the materials and bodies involved. Though art-history, critical-theory and visual-culture discourses profess a deep-seated interest in the material, James Elkins still asserts that they are fearful and superficial in the manner in which they engage with it. He identifies three problems in particular: ‘the fear of materiality and the slowness of the studio’, as well as a broader issue, touching on the two others, ‘the limit of phenomenological detail’ (2008, p.26, original emphasis omitted). The first problem is grounded in a perceived incompatibility between close physical encounter with an object and its contextual framing (historical, theoretical, social etc.), as well as the potential derogation, vis-à-vis class consciousness, of what may be perceived as the

detritus of manual labour. Secondly, the interaction and engagement with bodies, materials and gestures is inherently slow in comparison to cogitation that eschews them. And finally, though phenomenology provides perhaps the best possibility for an affective/effective attempt to come to terms with the experience of things, its scope within discourse remains questionable.

In the indexical gesture of the graphic mark, both drawer and writer scrutinise the landscape and body on the ground. Examining it thoroughly and closely as if by touch, they also survey it from the distance as a correlated map that constantly changes as a new path is drawn by the graphite-footed prowling on its territory. This shift between proximity and distance also reiterates the blindnesses of the drawer. The pen's eye – the wayfarer's boot – obscures the vision of the drawer. As pen and boot traverse, they persistently blind the one spot of crucial importance. They always shadow the spot that they – in that moment – inscribe and describe. By necessity, the surveyor's inscription blinds the surveyor in the moment of inscription.

But the pen's shadow and body are not the only impediments to seeing drawing. Derrida differentiates three types of blindness in view of drawing. Firstly, he remarks on 'the *aperspective of the graphic act*', the umbrage given by the implement and the gap traced by the trait, which 'must proceed in the night' and which is at once said to be a stand-in – mimetic or representative – for the figure but does not form part of the figure's 'spectacle' (1993, pp.44–5, italics in original). Again, doubly so, the trait is tracing itself before it shows and sees itself, but also shares no aspect of the figure it apparently traces through itself. And the one who draws, doubly blind to the drawing and the figure, can only see the one or the other: marking the impossibility not only of the trace – the trace of what?: the trace of that which is not seen or the unseen trace – but also of tracing – tracing what?: tracing what is not there. Deanna Petherbridge's observation that the '[l]ine is a representational convention' that does not find a match 'in the observable world', chimes with Derrida's, though she approaches drawing's trace quite differently (2010, p.90). Derrida invokes the night a second time to characterise the gap between the figure and the stroke that traces it, noting that '[t]he heterogeneity between the thing drawn and the drawing trait remains abyssal' (1993, p.45). The nocturnal depth of this abyss returns to the immeasurable distance and infinite proximity between what drawing sees and shows. Drawing is a process that happens on paper but is not limitable to it. The gesture of drawing begins prior to and continues beyond the graphic mark on the page though the force and affect of that mark are testament to the act beyond itself. As Derrida describes anecdotally, writing may similarly proceed blindly. When waking in the night or driving a car, we may write with eyes wide open in complete darkness or looking elsewhere. As in the drawing act, the 'hand of the blind [writer] ventures forth alone or disconnected, in a poorly delimited space; it feels its way, it gropes, it caresses as much as it inscribes, trusting

in the memory of signs and supplementing sight' (Derrida, 1993, p.3). Writing is guided by the pen's ferrule reading the paper's surface and the hand's rehearsed response to the touch of the page.

And yet the nocturnal tides all drawing not just the one called figurative. The pleasure in drawing, which is the same as its pain, is its lateral procession at night. Drawing as a process aims to determine its own indeterminacy and, as artefact, presents its indeterminate determination. To draw is to eliminate, stroke by stroke, many drawings in order to arrive at one, not one previously determined, but one that in its drawing drew itself out of infinitely many. And as each confident slick and probing dash erases another drawing, the one that reluctantly urges ahead knows not itself but negotiates itself in every mark, especially those it does not make but which are still made and constitute it in return. It is precisely here then that the gesture neither fills the body nor imposes itself on a substrate, for without body and material there would be no such gesture. There would be no such strokes without the confluence of bodies, no such confluence of bodies without the gesture. In this erasure of drawings, drawing, as process, draws itself forth in order to draw itself out as consequence. It is a consequence of strokes that neither intended it, nor are reducible to it. Drawing's necessary inseparability from its background shows itself in the void space that is not void, that is just as drawn as the drawn space without carrying the pen's marks. Its marks are gestures of an implement that draws undrawingly.

Nevertheless the intention of drawing remains, although it is not one that is ever fulfilled. Nanne Meyer describes the beginning of her drawings as guided by a 'more or less clear intention [Ab-Sicht], which may be *imageless*, a specific kind of premonition, a something, which I can drawingly push off from' (2012, p.141, author's translation and italics). The specific vocabulary, hyphenation and capitalisation are insightful here. *Absicht*, the commonplace German for the intention, purpose, aim or design, becomes a scopic intent, a fore-sight or fore-seeing that in translation cycles etymologically through the nightly depth that the obsolete fore-wit has to offer, from wit's *wissen*, to know, to *vidēre*, to see; and thus perhaps properly 'I have seen, hence, I know' (wát , wást , witon) (OED, 2016, s.v. *wit* v.1). Notwithstanding, this fore-wit is without image, a vision that does not see. The scope of its intent feels its way nocturnally through the strictures of drawing. It opens up drawing despite and because of the 'blank' page, against it and through it (Newman & de Zegher, 2003, pp.234–6). Drawing's frictions, offered and arising through the materials, supports and bodies in action, propel drawing in itself from its intent. Drawing pushes against intent, paper, graphite stick and self to arrive at itself. However, this pushing off from or pushing against is not a contrarian push, not a push that intends to overthrow the other. As in the prefix ab-, common to Ab-Sicht and abstossen, this push is but a frictional desire of facing another, of rubbing against another, an attrition arising in attraction that gives

rise because and despite of the drawer's intention. In this push against and within paper, representation, intention and gesture we however also recognise Derrida's push of language against silence. It is similarly a push 'against' an opposition and adversary who is also a counterpart and ground on which to stand. It provides the support and friction that propels the mark (visual, verbal, phonic).

> [S]ilence plays the irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and *against* which alone language can emerge – 'against' here simultaneously designating the content from which form takes off by force, and the adversary against whom I assure and reassure myself by force. (Derrida, 2001, pp.65–6, italics in original)

To disturb the notion of 'against' as merely antagonistic by demonstrating its supplementation and dependency on what it pushes off from is particularly meaningful because it addresses both material and medial aspects of drawing and writing practices. The art school bromide of 'working against the material' is here a point in case because it suggests an opposition to something that is not oppositional. If we take Ingold's assertion of material flux and transformation seriously (2007b), then there is nothing that can be done to matter that is not already a potential within the material itself. Burning a sheet of paper does not work against the material but shows it as combustible. This idea extends similarly to the contention of working against a certain medium. Gottfried Boehm argues '[t]hat a particular group of artists do not optimise media according to their immanent logic, but work against the grain, using them *inversely*' (2004, p.109, italics in original, author's translation). Exemplarising Cy Twombly's and Stéphane Mallarmé's work, he notes that the former moves the trace of painting from its identifiable sphere into one of uncertainty, as well as releasing writing from the 'logic of *succession*', while the latter shows writing's material characteristics (Boehm, 2004, p.112, italics in original, author's translation). Boehm asserts that particular artists inverse medial uses in order to expose and explore the rules governing them. This argumentation, though entirely plausible, is however also tautological. If the 'immanent logic' of a medium or practice can be inverted, this inversion is already part of the 'immanent logic' and thus not its inversion. The paradox returns to the assumption that there may be an optimal use of a medium, one that works optimally by not working against its grain. Consequently, the notion of 'working against' shows itself as the incapacity of a category to describe its own object. The importance of the substrate or the affect and power of handwriting are only marginal or 'parasitic' in a closed system of writing that is a priori a phonocentric, auxiliary, secondary, representative combinatorics of speech and which thus considers 'the

body of the written trace as a didactic and technical metaphor, as servile matter or excrement' (Derrida, 1988, p.16, 2001, p.248).

However, in the use of Derrida and Meyer materials are not optimally shaped into a preconceived notion of a medium or practice. Rather, material and gesture are constitutive of medial effects. The form of drawing does not arrive preformed, does not replicate that which is (not) there or that which is (not) imagined. In Jean-Luc Nancy's words, '[d]rawing is the opening [l'ouverture] of form', inseparable from its '[m]atter', which

> is the name of form's resistance to its deformation. It is not a formless 'content' that form comes to mold or model but rather the thickness, texture, and force of form itself.
> (2013, pp.1, 7)

Properly, as David Espinet reminds us, '"l'ouverture"' needs to be read multiply as well: drawing as the beginning of form, the 'opening' of the possibility of form but also drawing's 'persistent *openness*' which is never comprehensive or complete, always unclosably undetermined (2012, p.168, italics in original, author's translation; cf. Meskimmon & Sawdon, 2016). What (form) drawing shows is thus neither reducible to some referential thing, nor to the ideal of that thing, instead, it is the idea (ideated not ideal) of the thing offered as a (trans)formation in its unique and determinate stricture as drawing. Does that sound too much like hedging or tautology? If so, then the options Nancy offers are stark: on the one hand, an account – often art historical – that determines drawing as fixed information, drawing as note taking, its sensing, limited to sensory capacities, merely 'the simple perception of data'; on the other hand, drawing is persistently in formation, it also '*notes*' but only to enable a sensing that 'exhausts and exceeds' 'sensoriality or sensibility', 'sensing, [as] a faculty of making sense, or of letting it be formed' (2013, p.21, italics in original). Hence, drawing as the opening of form, requires a differentiation between drawing as immanent, formative force, a will to form (*Formungswille*), a form-generative momentum, and drawing as fully formed, settled and complete object, sensed retrospectively as a modality of the image: forma formans as opposed to forma formata (Nancy, 2013, p.21; cf. Espinet, 2012, pp.169–70; Meyer, 2012, pp.138–9. Hildebrandt, 2014, pp.48–9). For Nancy, the pleasure in drawing arises exactly in the persistent nascence that invents, forms, makes up, makes sense and in-forms. Drawing does not come to rest in a papery coffin, rather it continuous to unsettle itself in and beyond the paper, uncontainable by any gaze that aims to arrest it, *on paper* but not of it, determined but not determinable.

If the nocturnal advance of drawing and seeing drawing describes the first of Derrida's aspects of the powerlessness of the eye, then the second is named 'the

withdrawal (retrait) or the eclipse, the differential inappearance of the trait' (1993, p.53, italics in original). Derrida asks, once the tracing of the trait has occurred, what is this trait? It describes what is not there, an outline that demarcates the line outside no thing, it is situated between inside and outside of the figure. And even as it relates to itself, as a re-trait of a trait, it divides itself, disrupting (in its divisibility) all identification of itself:

> [O]nly the surroundings of the *trait* appear – that which the trait spaces by delimiting and which thus does not belong to the *trait. Nothing belongs to the trait*, and thus, to drawing and to the thought of drawing, not even its own 'trace.'
> (1993, p.54, italics in original)

The withdrawal of the trait (*le retrait du trait*) is a retreat that accompanies the recognition of its mark as the limitation of the spaces that it inscribes. The trait is never itself, but the difference between spaces marked outside themselves. Drawing and seeing drawing become subject to 'the law of the inter-view', it draws the spaces between the lines together , 'a *jalousie* (a blind) of *traits* cutting up the horizon' (Derrida, 1993, p.55, italics in original). This kind of drawing circumscribes an interlinear vision that differs and defers from its own traits. Its spaces are not marked and its constituent marks do not inscribe themselves. Drawing hovers and shimmers between the marks it makes and the spaces it leaves unmarked. Or differently, as James Elkins reads it, to consider an individual mark of a drawing detaches it from the rest of the picture. The mark will sink into the surface it marks and its own edges will take on the force and potential of marks themselves, until '*that* half-imaginary mark will begin to "wear itself out"' and so on (Elkins, 1995, p.837, italics in original; cf. Derrida, 1993, p.53). This same process of repetitive and ever-recursive deferral and difference again recognises the drawing of the blind.

As a potential effect of the withdrawal of the trait, Derrida notes 'the *third aspect* [of drawing's blindness]*: the rhetoric of the trait*' (1993, p.56, italics in original). The cession of the trait sees the emergence of the discursive, for Derrida provocatively poses the possibility that the imperialist rule of rhetoric over images is granted, rather than imposed, by the retreat, deferral and diffraction of the line that marks drawing. Though Elkins argues that 'Derrida's is a repressive reading' (1995, p.838), what comes into view throughout is Derrida's profound reluctance to delimit drawing and the viewing of drawing verbally. In fact, the scope of Derrida's blindness is circumscribed by what can be seen and said with certainty about drawing. Both Derrida's and Elkins' projects, albeit in different ways, seem to recognise the potential usurption of drawing by vision and words. Derrida, in considering the blindness of drawing, hence speaks of

the powerlessness of the eye, not as an insufficiency but to mark ‘the experience of drawing [as a] *quasi-transcendental* resource’ (1993, p.44, italics in original). The power of drawing arises here in the eye’s powerlessness to see drawing. A blindness that requires the blind to return to the drawing again and again, in order to see and be blind again, to see differently and yet still be unable to see totally.

Regarding the written mark, we noted that it averts exclusively pointing at its substrate, while the drawn one, on the other hand, cannot be entirely detached from it. Even when drawing seemingly approaches the transparency of writing, for example in architectural plans, typographic designs, medical illustrations etc. (cf. Voorhoeve, 2011; Lyotard, 2011, pp.195–6, 206), its line also always belongs to paper, though it never absolutely belongs to anything, not even itself. Drawing’s line traces a boundary that cannot absolutely exclude its paper, whereas writing cannot entirely include it. The phrasing may be reversed to show that writing also occurs on a substrate and drawing in a space illimitable to one singular sheet, though that is not to say that the result of the reversal makes the two practices the same. Rather, while writing can never truly belong to the paper and drawing never truly be separated from it, their shared graphic traits ensure that the vacillation cannot be arrested.

The way that writing as script, i.e. writing as graphic marks on paper, needs to be turned into language and (inner) speech may be exemplified through Klaus Weimar’s contention that reading is a ‘languaging [*Versprachlichen*] of writing on the one hand *and* the perception of speech [*Sprache*] on the other, though not in alternation but indivisibly at once’ (1999, p.50, italics in original, author’s translation). The German language permits Weimar to funambulate on the line of *Sprache* as language, as a shared and codified structure of linguistic patterns (*langue*), in the widest sense even human speech (*langage*) and speech as a use of language in an individual utterance (*parole*) (cf. de Saussure, 1966, pp.9–10, 13). His assertion therefore cannot avoid seeking to designate reading as also a ‘speechifying of writing’ with its concomitant ‘perception of language’, as well as the all the other remaining combinations (cf. Renner, 2010, p.46). What is remarkable about this analysis in any case is that writing is not perceived as language, rather that the reader needs to turn it into language and/or inner speech. This inner speech itself, as Hans Lösener has indicated, is in a precarious position between language and non-language, too, because by definition it does not speak (its sound is not heard) but only rehearses a phoneme (its sound is perceived) silently (2006, p.49). ‘Reading means to speak to oneself *in another’s name* based on writing’ (Weimar, 1999, p.56, italics in original, author’s translation), which makes the reader both sender and receiver of an impossible translation based on written marks. There is thus no simple and self-evident automatism, mechanism or process that absolutely prescribes and limits how writing is encountered and read (cf. though Weimar, 1999, p.59). Why, however, would this reading be dissociable from

the material constituents of writing? Even outside of the visual arts and in the most trivial senses we recognise the importance of particular physical characteristics of writing. The proposition to hand out university degrees scribbled with a biro on the back of a fag packet or as a virtual-paper PDFs does not offend because the former is defiled and the latter potentially fraudulent, but because the acts of writing are illimitable to a transcendent understanding of text. Writing's power issues as paperwork and paper's work. As the use of words and phrases is culturally, politically, socially, contextually, personally etc. encoded and shifting, so the co-importance of material actors needs to be called upon to explore why a word-identical condolence message sent via letter or WhatsApp can be read very differently. Conversely, the assumption that drawing is intimately bound to its singular sheet of paper appears overdrawn for it is quite imaginable that the subsequent one in the pad would have permitted a drawing whose difference is perceivable only in the sense of Nelson Goodman's distinction between the perfect forgery and the original, that is to say, we cannot discriminate between the two works now but we may in the future (1976, pp.105–6).

Derrida comments that there are arbitrary conventions of discourse – oppositionality, presence, genre etc – which are merely self-instituting and -legitimising, and arrive at the cost of the marginalisation of other phenomena. Instead, he suggests, it is necessary to consider the impact of temporal and material factors on the economy of writing. Of course, this will disturb the existing graphematic and structural constraints.

> Are we now going to integrate such fringes into the text, and take account of such frames? Are all these parasites to be incorporated into the economy of discourse? Must the surface of the paper, the contents of the time at our disposal, etc. all be integrated into our calculations? If so, what about the ink remaining in my typewriter ribbon? And yet: why not? That is the question. (1988, p.45)

Moreover, the analysis of writing's signifiers will also need to include the gesture of writing. 'As concerns the forms of signs, even within phonetic writing, the cathexes of gestures, and of movements, of letters, lines, points, the elements of the writing apparatus (instrument, surface, substance, etc.)' these are elements of a understanding of writing that does not arbitrarily include some graphic aspects while designating others as parasites or excrement (Derrida, 2001, p.290).

Conversely for drawing, which may just as easily be subsumed into a blind materialism as into a legible text constituted by transparent signifiers. It, too, is held in the abeyance of a mark that is also a gesture and material, whilst being and making

visible. Elkins similarly supports the suspense of drawing in avoiding the reduction of it into either image or material:

> Marks blur and fade into one another, and even the freshest drawing will have uncertain moments where the texture of the paper confounds the sense of a mark, or a group of marks converge into a dark confusion, or a mark moves so lightly across the page that it is not securely visible. No image is composed in any other way.
> What is a figure? A faint webbing of paper fibers and remnants of chalk; a morass of sticky oil.
> (1995, p.834, cf. 1999)

At least for writing, there now exists a growing amount of cognitive-psychological research that demonstrates how different technologies and materials impact the intellectual capacity of its users. For example, it has been shown that students taking lecture notes longhand have equally good factual recall as those typing along on a computer (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014). However, the handwriters outperformed the typerwriters in conceptual questions even when other computer-based distractions were eliminated. One of the assumptions is that increased ease of note-taking does not facilitate the reformulation and processing of information required for the slower longhand writing (cf. Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2016). In fact, 'disfluency', reduced transcription fluency, has been shown to result in enhanced lexical sophistication, sentence complexity and cohesion of the writing, when the essays of skilled typewriters composing with both hands were compared to their one-handed efforts (Medimorec & Risko, 2016; Medimorec, Young, & Risko, 2017). Though the results are reversed when longhand writers are asked to write in an unfamiliar calligraphy, which also resulted in a less fluent writing process (Olive, Alves, & Castro, 2009). Similarly, the interrelations between 'better' handwriting and reading proficiency have been experimentally tested and confirmed (Gimenez et al., 2014). The exact disentaglement of temporal, material, gestural etc factors shall not interest us here, what is however important are that ergonomics, 'material affordances and sensorimotor contingencies' are of demonstrable importance to our intellectual history (Mangen & Balsvik, 2016, p.99).

Writing and drawing are gestural practices that rely on material and technological interactions which are not neutral to their intellectual and affective force. Neither paper nor instruments are inert tools but active constituents of our intellectual development. The separation of sensory matter and cognitive effect may not be erased but its continuous displacement towards a more integrated approach is required in order to account for the encounters with and practices of writing and drawing. In order to

continue Foucault's, Flusser's, Kittler's and others' attentive project regarding the interactions of our material and cognitive life, we will need to think them further even if it uncomfortably expands the arbitrary limitations we have already imposed.

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